

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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TO
THE MIDDLE CLASSES OF
ENGLAND.

*On the benefits which Reform would
produce to them.*

New York, Sept. 24, 1819.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUN-
TRYMEN,

It is a strange thing to me, that the labouring classes, I mean those who live on wages, should be the only persons, generally speaking, who are zealous enough in the cause of Reform to put themselves in the front of that cause. Their lot, at worst, is the parish relief. To this they are entitled by law. Therefore, they appear to me to be extremely disinterested in their efforts, seeing that, if they succeed, they will benefit *you* more than they will themselves. Every effort they make is an effort to lighten *your* burdens; and yet, you stand aloof, and, at best, content yourselves with *wishing them success*; when, by one single movement of *yours*, in only one great town, that success would be insured.

It is not the man who has nothing, who suffers most; it is he who is just on the eve of having nothing: not he who has had his bed taken from under him; but he who is going to have it taken from under him: not he who is fed by poor-rates; but he who is paying to the poor-rates at the expence of his own back and belly. Some of you are now in this latter state: many of you will

soon be paupers or have put an end to your lives; and all of you, one after the other, are on the road to this fatal end, from which nothing can save you but *flight or reform*.

Every ship which arrives at this port from our once happy country, comes freighted with persons bearing their industry, skill and capital from that country, and bringing with them accounts of the misery, the oppression, and the dismay prevailing there. It is my firm conviction, that no country, in any part, or age, of the world, has witnessed such a mass of misery, of wretchedness, of human suffering and degradation, as is now exhibited in England, where all the ties of country, home, kindred, parents and children are so completely bursted asunder, that innocent and meritorious persons implore the favour of being banished to foreign lands; and thus, pray for, as a mercy, the ignominious lot of the malefactor. "Any thing but England," the despairing fugitives seem to say; "the raging sea, the savage wilderness, the poisonous swamp; any thing but England." The man who has escaped from the fangs of the Boroughmongers of England thinks nothing of bears, wolves and rattle-snakes. The noise of the latter is not half so hideous as the rap, rap, rap; bang, bang, bang; of the Borough-taxgatherer. An Englishman, THOMAS EDDY, who has published a narrative of his journey through the woods to reach

Birkbeck, says, that he was sleeping, one night, with a fire near him to keep off the musquitoes.—About midnight he “was waked “by the noise of a wolf, which “was very near him. But,” says he, “I had been dreaming that I “had my goods seized by the sheriff’s officer for taxes, and that “my wife was crying as they took “her bed and linen away; and, “I solemnly declare, that, though “the wolf *was just at hand*, I “never felt greater relief in all my “life!”

“Any thing but England!”—What a thing is this to say!—What a sentiment for Englishmen to utter! I love England as well as any man ever loved a country. I would sooner suffer death than become a citizen or subject of any foreign state: yet, if I thought that *no change* would take place in the mode of governing England, and that I could do nothing towards the producing of that change; I should no more think of going to England than I should of tossing myself into the sea.

Do you imagine; yes you do; that you shall escape from the wreck? Every one of you, though upon the very verge of the pauper-list, thinks that you shall not fall into it. You will, unless there be a reform, very speedily. You go on hoping from day to day, for *better times*, without perceiving, that it is not the *times*, but the Boroughmongers, that are at work upon you. Each one, instead of a very trifling effort to *shake off* your load, is continually trying to get along with it better than his neighbour. Then a *reform* appears, to many, to be so *distant* a good. To be sure, a man whose affairs must wind up on next Saturday cannot be saved by it, unless the reform

take place on Friday. But, though it may be too distant to save a few, it may be near enough to save the main part; and, though the Borough system will not ruin some for a good while, it must ruin all in the end.

Some are *afraid* of a change, lest things should be carried *too far*. Now, then, observe, *a great change there must be*, let the consequences be what they may; and, as to the *extent* of the change, the sooner it be made, the less will be its extent; for, a change much less extensive than that, which must now take place, would have been sufficient *before the passing of the dungeon-bills*. It appears, to some men, that the Reformers have, as yet, *gained nothing*. Faith! they have already gained a great deal. They have gained *numbers*. They have gained *confidence*. They have gained a *contempt of dungeons*. They have gained *knowledge*. They have gained the proof to all the world, that they are opposed to the *foolishest* creatures that ever existed. They have gained all the young men and boys, and a *good part of the women*. They have gained a full exposure of the *paper-bubble*. They have not yet gained the *end* of their labours; but the time is not yet come. They have put the Boroughmongers upon the *defensive*. Nobody ever conquered *at once*. In every war, there are divers attacks. Besides, nobody, unless some very hairbrained person, either expects or hopes, to advance against the Boroughmongers without the aid of that able and incorruptible auxiliary, the *paper-bubble*. That is our co-operator, who bleeds the monster in the foot, while we attack him in front. It would be downright

madness to assail him with all our force just as he is beginning to feel the point of the lancet. No: let him bleed well first: let us watch his movements: let us wait till he begins to reel, and then pour on upon him with a demand of all our rights.

The *dungeon-acts* were a great victory gained by the reformers, and especially as the work was crowned by the *indemnity act*. Those acts proved, that reform was to be resisted only by measures of *absolute government*. They proved, that we were *right*; that we had *the laws on our side*; that we had *reason on our side*; that we had *the powers of persuasion on our side*; and, that, as long as the laws of the land were in force, we could not be resisted. From the moment of the passing of those bills we shall have to date the triumph of the cause of reform.

We are called *wild and visionary*. I am supposed to have as much to do as most men in this matter. Have I proved myself to be *wild and visionary*? The condition of the affair of the paper-bubble ought to be the voucher for my being neither *wild* nor *visionary*. The set, who hold this language, are notoriously the greatest fools that ever breathed; the wildest, the most visionary, the most despicable, fools. No scheme of theirs has ever succeeded; no rule, no principle, laid down by them, has not proved false. They have shown themselves unable to avoid offending; they have never been able to persuade, or to conciliate, those whom they had offended, and their remedy and only remedy has been *brutal force*, used under no other than the tyrants' plea, *necessity*.

Those who call us *wild and visionary* do it, perhaps, from malice, without any particular motive; but, the tendency of the accusation, if believed, is to *make the Middle Class keep aloof from the Labouring Class*; in order that these latter may be an *easy prey*. You see the Boroughmonger prints continually comforting themselves with saying, that such or such a meeting was composed of "*nothing but the labouring classes*." These classes are not *direct tax-payers*; they have no magistrates to depend on for *licences*; they have no *customers* to be afraid of; the sheriff cannot come to take away their *bundle of straw*; they are afraid of no *creditors*; they are free from all those ties which keep you in check. If you, in any one great town, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham, or the like, were to join heartily and cordially with the Labouring Classes, for one week, we should have a reform in one month from that day. If the whole of the tradesman part of any great town were to say: "We can no longer pay taxes: let the law take its course." Not ten men's goods would be seized. The thing would stop; and a reform must come.

But, you may think, that a reform would *do you no good*; and, it is the constant effort of the Boroughmongers to make you believe this. They would even persuade you, that it would *do you harm*; and that the reformers only want to have the power of plundering you. The tax-gatherer, at the very moment he empties your pockets, and leaves you word, that he shall, please God, come and empty them again as soon as you have got any thing in them; at this very moment, he

gravely tells you, knitting down his brows, to *beware* of the Reformers; for, that, disguise things how they may, their object is *plunder*. You might answer, in this case, "pray Mr. Grasper, do you think that the reformers can do *more* than empty our pockets?" If he went on to say, that they would burn your houses and kill you; you might observe, that they must, then, be too silly for plunderers; for that they would, by burning and killing, lose their prey; and that it would be much better to leave you alive to carry on business for them, who might, then, like Mr. Grasper, come and empty your pockets as often as you should get a few pounds into them.

This *warning* of you to beware of the reformers is upon a footing with Lamb and Canning saying, that the Dungeon Bill was a measure calculated to preserve the *freedom* of the country; and this reminds one of the silly saying of the elder PEARL, that the stoppage of cash-payments at the Bank; that is to say, the Bankruptcy of the Bank, was absolutely necessary to prevent the French from succeeding in their *endeavours* to destroy the credit of the Bank. In order to prevent the reformers from plundering you of your money, the Boroughmongers take your money away. These are very considerate gentlemen. It is, then, a false notion, I suppose, that it is to fatten themselves that the sinecure placemen take such immense sums from you: it ought to be said, that they take these sums from you in order to prevent your having them taken away in the shape of plunder by the reformers. "Stand still, good folks. Don't make wry faces. Let us take out the last penny. We

"do not want to hurt you; but, if we leave you a penny in your pockets, the wild and visionary reformers will come and take it out. Stop: let us unbutton the knees of your breeches. There may be a penny slipped down there. And, if you have *metal* about you, the reformers, like free-masons, will take it away."

Though all reasoning may be vain with men who can be the dupes of such barefaced cheater, I will endeavour to shew you, that it is perfectly impossible, that you should not gain by a *Reform*. And here I need not go into any description of what sort of reform is contemplated; for our Boroughmonger foes refuse *all* reform. They will let us have *none*. They will have things to remain as they are. They say, that the thing, as it now is, is the best thing that can be; and *that it shall go on*; that there shall be *no change*. Observe, therefore, that it is not between this sort of reform and that sort of reform that you have to choose; but between the present state of things and a reform of some sort or other which shall cause the Commons' House to consist of men different from the present in their views and in their measures. Lord Fitzwilliam, in a letter of his to Lord Stamford, complains of the "*large extent*" of the plans of the Reformers. Why, what signifies the extent? The more or the less is of no consequence at all, as the matter now stands; seeing that the Boroughmongers refuse *all* reform; seeing that they have repeatedly refused even to *discuss* the question; seeing that they accuse of seditious and treasonable designs *all* those who demand a reform; seeing that they have answered our petitions by "shaking the halter in"

"our faces, and by rattling in our ears the keys of the dungeon." The more or the less, therefore, is of no consequence at all in the present state of the dispute; and, if Lord Fitzwilliam was not wild and visionary, when he wrote his letter, he could not, at any rate, see very clearly what he was about. When, indeed, the Boroughnon-gers have said, that they will do *something*, and actually begun to do something, the question will assume a new aspect. We may then have time and patience to discuss *terms*. But, the reply to the halter and the dungeon-keys is, and can be, nothing but hatred, defiance and hostility. Mr. HARRISON, at the Nottingham Meeting, said (as I read) that our enemies *talked* much of a *moderate reform*; but they *made none*: that they confined their good-will to *words*, and their ill-will to *blows*. If, he said, they had only made a *moderate* reform, instead of fifty thousand men assembled in that day to *complain*, five hundred thousand would have assembled to *congratulate and to thank*. Nothing was ever more true than this; for, though, certainly, the people would, in the end, demand, and obtain a radical reform; still, they would be *pacified* by any indication of a sincere disposition to do them justice. But, our head-strong, ignorant foes seem to think that any concession will be injurious to them. Their hardihood is that of fear. And thus they go on widening the breach; and that, too, at the very same moment when their paper-foundation is falling away from under their feet.

What we seek in a reform is *practical good*. It would be no small good to put an end to bribery, corruption and perjury. But, the

good, which we contemplate, is of a much more extensive nature. We contemplate a deliverance of the nation free from its present misery and degradation, and a prevention of those still greater evils which are coming on in due succession to make once famous England the contempt and the scorn of the world. We are actuated by no selfish and sordid motives; but by motives the most noble that can animate the human heart.

It is acknowledged, that the nation must sink, unless its state become better than it now is. And, do you see the means of that state being made better by the present men, proceeding as they have done, and persevering in the same system? It is now notorious, that the causes of our ruin and degradation are an enormous burden of taxes, co-operating with a false paper-money. How this base and false money works in producing ruin and misery I need not now show, seeing, that my school-boys, Liverpool, Grenville, Peele and Brougham, so fully, though, perhaps, not very *neatly*, repeated all my doctrines on that head, during the last spring. But, it was curious to observe how carefully these men, and all the rest, avoided to couple the paper-money with its co-operator, *the Taxes*. And, yet, the paper-money *without the taxes* would be a mere nothing to what they are both taken together. It is the taxes that makes the paper-money spread ruin so far and wide, and inflict such indelible wounds.

We have a complete experimental proof of this here, in the United States, at this very moment. Four months ago all was prosperity. The banks began breaking about that time: the quantity of

circulating medium was suddenly diminished: rents, land, meat, wages, all fell instantly: the borrowers were ruined: trade experienced a shocking stagnation. But, now, at the end of *only four months*, things have become *steady*: prices have assumed a settled state; *coin has come out in abundance sufficient*: we hear the rattle of the dollars once more: and, which is very curious, English guineas and sovereigns and all the other English gold coins are very frequently seen in circulation! Every bank that remains pays in specie upon the nail. French crowns and half crowns form no inconsiderable part of the currency. *Plenty of new English shillings and sixpences!*

Thus has this country got rid of the degrading curse. But, then, mind, there was, and there is no taxgatherer to come and demand in specie, payment of a tax, laid on in paper-money! Mind THIS; for this is the thing that is producing ruin and starvation in England. The quantity of money afloat here now is, perhaps, not more than three-fourths of what it was five months ago. All prices have fallen. But, as there was no taxgatherer to come and demand, as in England, as much in nominal amount as he had demanded before, the evil is temporary; and is, in fact, already got over.

In England the case is wholly different. There the whole of the land and houses and labour are *pawned* to fundholders and to sinecure placemen, placemen, pensioners, grantees, and, indeed, to an army too, if that be to continue a permanent establishment. This pawn demands a *fixed* annual sum to be paid in the way of interest or in that of salary or pay; and,

therefore, as the sum is always the same nominally, though it be ten times as much really, the reducing of prices must ruin all those who pay to the pawn without getting a part of the interest or pay out of the pawn collection.

The Boroughmongers, seeing the danger of continuing a paper-bubble, as Grenville now himself calls it. Seeing that a bubble is a thing that may, at any moment, burst, have "*resolved*" to return to cash-payments; that is to say, they have *resolved*, that the nation shall, with a currency greatly diminished in quantity, continue to pay to the pawn to the former nominal amount of payment; that is to say, to make the nation pay, in fact, two, or, perhaps, three times as much in taxes as it paid before; that is to say, to give to the sinecure placemen the price of two or three bushels of wheat instead of that of one which was given him before. To resolve, my friends, is an easy matter; but, as our pretty fellows will find, to *execute* a resolution is sometimes a very difficult matter; and, if they execute their *resolution*, though it has now assumed the shape of a law, I will give Castlereagh leave to put me upon a gridiron, while Sidmouth stirs the fire, and Canning stands by making a jest of my writhing and my groans. And yet, *if they do not execute it*, what a figure will they *then* make? Will any one *then* have the impudence to pretend to believe, that they are the men to extricate England from her difficulties? And will those little bands of rapacious miscreants, called PITT CLUBS, any longer dare to show their faces before the oppressed and insulted people, whom they have assisted to plunge into ruin, misery, and degradation?

You see, then, my friends, that it is the *taxes*, which is the obstacle to the restoration of the country. If these could be removed, the cash-payments might be resumed with little difficulty. That poor creature, VANSITTART, told us, three years ago last winter, that the way to restore prosperity was to keep up a *sinking fund* of fourteen millions, which, by drawing small lots of money from the people, would get into great masses, to be lent to the people! I asked the creature at the time, in my Register, whether he did not think, that it might be as well to let the fourteen millions remain in the people's pockets, and not take it away first, and then lend it to them again. This very same thing has now put a stop to *twelve* out of the *fourteen* millions of his fund; and *this*, he says, is the *true* way of restoring the prosperity of the nation.—What, then, are we to expect from such men? The parliament supported him in *both instances*, by an undivided vote! This sinking-fund scheme, which was the joint invention of Pitt and Fox, is now called a "*humbug*" even within the walls of St. Stephen. It was so called from the out-set by our famous countryman, PAINE. But, the poor, shattered-brained things, who manage our affairs, read ADAM SMITH and such like spinners of intricate stuff. If they had read, and acted upon, the political-economical works of PAINE, instead of venting their poor spite by burning him in effigy, what a happy country England would now have been!

It is the *taxes* that press you down into the list of paupers, though JUDGE BAILEY (whom I may more fully notice another time) has recently, in a long *twat-*

tle of his, told his hearers that taxes are a *blessing*; a blessing, indeed, they may be to the *receivers*; but, alas! for the *payers*! However, it is, in our case, a sudden augmentation of taxes, and an enormous one, under the name of *returning to cash-payments*, or, rather, of an *attempt* to return to those payments. The Bank Directors told the wise Committee, that the real question was, not whether they would be able to resume cash-payments, but whether *the country would be able to bear* the measures necessary to that return. The Borough gentlemen resolved to make the country bear them, and you are now beginning (for it is merely beginning) to feel the effects of the dreadful experiments. Sand and salt, Solomon says, are *heavy*; but, then the weight of them is nothing, compared with that of a *fool's wrath*; and PORE says, that it is hard to tell which is most dangerous, a *fool's wrath*, or a *fool's love*. Whether it be the wrath or the love of our ninny-hammers to which you are indebted for your present miseries is no matter. That they are the authors of those miseries is certain; and, therefore, it must be most monstrous folly to hope for relief from any other remedy than that of such a reform as shall prevent them from having the power to play their pretty pranks any longer.

If it be asked, whether any other men could have acted in a manner, in this case, less injurious to the nation, my answer is, that I believe it to be impossible to find upon the face of the earth any other set of men, who would, under similar circumstances, have acted in a manner so injurious to the nation. Mind, I am, by no means supposing, that they *mean*

to pour out this curse upon the country: because it is *not their interest* that ruin and starvation should dry up the means of paying salaries and sinecures. It is not their *interest*, that you should be made paupers and sent to claim your share of the produce of the land. I am far from supposing that they *meant* to produce the misery; because that would be to suppose them to be Devils acting knowingly against themselves.—No: they did not mean it. They wished to *secure* themselves in the possession of their power; and, in adopting means, they exhibited that sort of confusion of mind, which is produced by fear operating upon profound ignorance.

A very eminent lawyer of America, who had read the Report, and who was talking with me about it yesterday morning exclaimed: "D— them, there must be *some* men of sense amongst them."—"Why," said I, "I have often said the same thing to myself; but, really, there cannot be."—In the usual sense of the word they are, many of them, sensible enough. They are *sharp* men. Know, now, for instance, how to hatch a plot, set a spy to work, draw up a plausible statement, make a catching speech. Canning is a very able banterer and detector of faults and follies, and can, with great ease, raise a laugh against men far more wise and able than himself. Castlereagh is a very expert *clerk*: can write a smooth letter, and, if not too long, a state-paper on an ordinary official subject. As to Sidmouth he has no one talent, except that of cool assurance, with a most unmeaning look. However, take the whole mass together, their knowledge is a compound of special pleading

and stock-broking with a smatch of army and naval slangery. As to the great matters, which ought to occupy the minds of statesmen and legislators, namely, the causes of national prosperity and national misery, they have never *thought* of these till of late. The money of the country they have left to the Bank, and the taxing to any low, grubbing industrious fellow, that could find out the means of preventing people from avoiding a tax. They have known nothing at all of the effects of paper-money upon prices. They have stood and *gaped* at these effects, and wondered what produced them. They saw the poor-rates increase, and wondered what could be the cause, especially when provisions were *cheap*. They found the farmers ruined with large crops in their barns. How they *gaped* then! There was a *want* of mouths. There was *too much* food. That was the cause of the distress. Soon after, they had got *too much* mouth, and too little bread. That was the cause of the misery. There was an over population: population must be checked. Then they had two abundant harvests. Still the misery went on; and went on increasing, too. Finding, at last, that neither times of plenty nor those of scarcity afforded them any relief; finding that neither corn-bills nor dungeon-bills would afford them the means of facing their expenditure; finding that they could not longer support even the appearances of a sinking fund; compelled to abandon this great humbug; they began to be alarmed in good earnest; and, unwilling to confess their own errors, *threw the whole blame on the Bank*, came and ransacked the Register, ex-

claimed most manfully against the effects of the *paper-bubble*, and *resolved* to put an end to it by compelling the Bank to pay in coin.

But such men never look at but one part of a subject at a time. They have not the capacity to see all the many parts, of a thing like this, at one and the same time. Their reasoning is like the conduct of a miller, who should know how to set the water-wheel in motion and not know how to feed the hopper. They, therefore, appear not to have looked, at all, at the Debt, the Army, the Sinecures, the Pensions, the Civil List, which demand *taxes*; or, they were afraid, or ashamed, to look at these things; and, they, while they took away the means of paying these taxes, *resolved* that the taxes should be paid. They confessed, that the burdens of the people were too great; they said they wished to lighten them; and they *resolved* to do that which would *double their weight*!

Let us take an illustration. CANNING'S Mother and Sister, Mrs. HUNN and her daughter, receive *five hundred pounds* a year out of the taxes. The grant is in these words: "Walter Burrows, Esq. in trust for Mary and Maria Hunn, *five hundred pounds* a year, grant by warrant, dated 20th of May, 1799, to be paid during their lives, and during the life of the survivor." So that we have already paid, in principal money, *ten thousand pounds* to this former play-actress and her daughter, who, it appears, has no higher honour than that of being a half-sister of the Portugal Ambassador. But, this is not the point now to be attended to. We are now about to see how this charge of Mrs. Hunn and Miss

Hunn is made *worse* to us by the *resolution* to return to cash-payments.

It is very clear, that whatever is taken away from the people who carry on business, who study, or who employ themselves in bodily labour; it is very clear, that, whatever is taken *from* them, and *given* to Mrs. Hunn, must leave just so much *less* with them; just so much less for them to eat, drink, wear, or lay up. Now, then, when the paper-money is largely afloat, and there is no talk of cash payments, the prices of all things are high, and wheat, for instance, sells for fifteen shillings a bushel. Of course, Mrs. Hunn gets from the people, every year, the price of *six hundred and sixty-six bushels of wheat*. But, if we return to cash payments, and the wheat becomes *five shillings a bushel*, Mrs. Hunn will get from the people, every year, the price of *two thousand bushels of wheat*. So that, by this operation, her pension is augmented *three fold*.

It is not come to this *yet*; and it never will; for, before it can come to this Mrs. Hunn must live upon the people's dead bodies, for nine tenths of them will be starved to death. But, mind, this is what cash-payments must bring us to. This is, in fact, what the wise men have *resolved* to bring us to; though they thought they were resolving no such thing. However, the miseries, those additional and extraordinary miseries, that you *now* experience, are caused by this *resolution*: they are caused by an *attempt*, not to *pay* in specie, but an attempt to *prepare* to pay in specie. The open effect of this attempt is to make what is vulgarly called a *scarcity of money*. You see goods fall in price, labour falls in price, people who owe mo-

ney cannot pay. But, the fact is, that the *taxes are raised in real amount*, just as Mrs. Hann's pension is raised. Mrs. Hann takes more from us than she took before; and as all the rest who live on the taxes do the same, you are tumbling down into ruin, and the labouring class into a state of half-starvation.

Well, then, you will say, we can never have specie payments, and this accursed paper-bubble must always continue. Oh, no! It may be put an end to, and the sooner the better. I have, for many years, been urging the necessity of putting an end to it. I know, that there can be neither happiness nor safety 'till it be put an end to. But, I have never been such an ass as to propose to put an end to it by making the people pay the *present* taxes in gold and silver. I had seen the salaries of the Judges, for instance, DOUBLED since cash-payments ceased; and was I fool-rogue enough to propose to continue to pay this double salary when cash-payments should be revived? No; never. And, when, in 1811, HORNER and the Bullion crew were proposing to make the Bank pay in cash, I, in *Paper against Gold* bid them *reduce the salaries, the pensions, the pay and the interest of the Debt*.

Is it not notorious, that the labourers and manufacturers' wages are reduced in proportion as other prices are reduced? What would you think of a law to compel the farmer to pay John Chopetick the same sum of wages when wheat is five shillings a bushel as when wheat is fifteen shillings a bushel? Why, you would be shocked at the idea of such a law. And yet such a law would be neither more foolish nor more unjust, than a law to return to cash-payments without

reducing the salaries of the Judges, together with all pensions, annuities, and so forth, payable out of the taxes.

Well, then, what is to be done? To return to cash-payments is necessary, absolutely necessary to the very existence of the nation as an independent state. England is *now* the only country in the world disgraced by a false paper-money; disgraced by a paper-bubble, that may, at any hour, be *puffed-out*. While this bubble exists, no man has any thing, that he can, with propriety, call his own. No contract can be good for any thing. A continual violation of contracts must be going on; and there must exist a tyranny and robbery, which, under the name of banking, will blast any bud of prosperity. But, how can the nation defend its rights or its honour with a paper-bubble, that the most feeble state will, at any moment, be able to blow up? There will be no occasion to use powder and ball against such a country. A few thousands of pounds expended on bank notes, properly distributed, will end the war by putting an end to the then existing government, and by throwing the country into utter confusion.

The paper-bubble must, then, be got rid of. But, say you, cannot this be done *without a Reform*? The thing is impossible. The interest of the Debt must be, for the far greater part, swept away; and, finally, it must be wholly swept away. The pension list must be reduced to the standard of *services*. The sinecure list, the grant list, the staff list, the army and all its infinite multitude of colonels and generals must undergo a thorough scouring, and the taxing tribe and

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law-tribe must undergo the same. That enormous public estate, called the Crown-Lands, and that other, called Public-Charities, must be placed in a proper situation as to the receipt of their revenues and the application of them. This done, and a just and fair and easy and expeditious mode of receiving and expending adopted, the king's dominions would be the happiest in the world and he the most happy and glorious sovereign.

But, there needs nothing more than the bare enumeration of the things to be done, in order to convince us that a Boroughmonger parliament cannot do them. Experience convinces us, that they *will* not do them; but, we may clearly see, that, if they would, they cannot. To do them they must undo their minds and their nature; but, besides this, *the people want a reform*; they have proved their right to it; and, rather than not obtain it, they will, to be sure, join with the fundholders! So that, those who refuse a reform, can never do anything effectual in reducing the interest of the Debt, and, I am sure that they cannot, in the smallest degree, reduce the force or the expence of the army.

Thus, then, to me it appears as clear as day-light, that the country is to be saved only by a Reform in the Commons' House of Parliament: and, if you, the Middle Classes of society, were, only in one very large town, to declare openly for that reform, we should *have it*; and there would be an end of all this turmoil and misery. Your example would catch like lightning. The Boroughmongers would give way; a new order of things would immediately follow. To that rack-

ing anxiety, that wasting and killing despair, which now hows you down and makes your lives miserable, would succeed happiness in your homes and love of country and of all belonging to country. We should no longer hear of men petitioning to be transported; the capital, skill and industry of our country would no longer be banished by the inexorable taxgatherer to go to enrich and to ornament and to add to the power of rival nations.

The heart sickens at the sight of a great country perishing by piece-meal under the hands of a set of arrogant, ignorant, brutal Boroughmongers. Not less than thirty *Scotsmen*, from the neighbourhood of Paisley, lately arrived here, have visited me within this week. To see these decent, sober, thoughtful men; to hear their accounts of the motives that have induced them to quit their native land; to hear the recital of their sufferings and their sacrifices; to behold the tear ready to start when they say that nothing but a dread of starvation could have driven them from Scotland; is enough to drive one mad. One's tongue involuntarily exclaims: "Perdition light on the villains who have done this!"

It is not now a question of Reform, or no Reform: it is a question of Reform, or the total ruin of the kingdom. No other remedy will be of any avail in the restoring of prosperity. Nothing short of Reform can make the country fit to live in; nothing short of it can give security to property; can give to any man any thing to call his own; can prevent the name of England from being held in contempt and scorn throughout the world. Break, therefore, the ligaments that bind

your tongues in silence; stand forward in this sacred cause of justice, humanity, patriotism and loyalty; show yourselves in the crowds of your poorer countrymen; let the taxgatherer *take* his demands; and we shall speedily see days of ease, safety and happiness.

In the hope, that you will thus act, and thereby show that the blood of our forefathers' still flows in your veins, and that, though oppressed, you are not wholly enslaved, I remain,

Your friend and countryman,
WM. COBBETT.

TO

HENRY HUNT, Esq.

New York, 26th Sept. 1819.

MY DEAR HUNT,

We have just got a short account of the "*Manchester Murders*." I can hardly call it an account, as it consists of only a short paragraph or two from Irish papers, inserted in the New York papers. But, I can clearly see, that the whole proceeding, on the part of the people, was *lawful*; and, therefore, all the violence was *unlawful*. What may be the result I know not; but, it clearly appears to me, that things cannot long remain in the state of 16th of August. Our foes must give us our rights; or all *law* must be laid aside; and the country must then go on, as long as it can, under a system of open force-military.

The Whigs are our greatest enemies. The base PERRY, a few days before your Manchester Meeting, blamed SIDMOUTH for not seizing hold of *you* at Smithfield! He is a mere base tool of tyranny; more ready; more active; more a volunteer in malignity, than the COURIER-man.—The former, like his faction, is a

vile *hypocrite*. I wonder the fellow is not ashamed to be seen alive.

To say that I was *pleased*, or even to say that I was *delighted*, at your triumph over WAITHMAN at the Common Hall, held after the Smithfield Meeting, would be to express coldly what I felt.—Surely there never was so great a portion of folly, conceit, and impudence assembled before, as that man possesses. "Silent in the senate, and loud in the Tavern;" presumptuous, vain, empty; his cormorant vanity seems ready to swallow up the very rattle of the hackney coaches. Any other man, placed as he was last winter, with his *pretensions*, and doing *nothing at all*, would have sneaked away into some cockloft and hanged himself in his French silk handkerchief. But *he* comes out as bold as brass; talks as loud, gapes as wide, and looks as impudent as ever; utters a long string of incoherent phrases, shakes his head, and then stares like a stuck-pig, till he draws out something like applause from his audience. I could not help laughing at his *threatening* the Hall, that he would "make his bow and retire," and at the Hall, with singular sang-froid, making no response! A man ought to be very sure of his ground before he ventures on a threat of this sort; and, if it fail, he ought to gather up his good temper again as soon as possible. Pretty girls, indeed, can with impunity, menace their lovers with quitting them; but cocky Waithman, will, if he try it often, soon find, that *he* cannot play such tricks without having to repent of it. However, we have the comfort to know (if we can believe Mr. FAVEL) that the "*Metropolis*;" to wit, the Common Coun-

cil, will, next winter, **FIX** on a plan of reform which shall *unite* the people. The people are quite united upon that subject; and it is not in the power of these silly men to disunite them. You will hear Waithman say no more about reform. He likes *seven* years better than *one*, take my word for it.

We have been laughing, here, at the Letter of Lord Fitzwilliam to Lord Stamford. The former *congratulates* the latter, that the Meetings of the reformers are becoming *smaller*; and immediately comes your *little* meeting at Manchester. The letter says, that the reformers talk in a tone of *humiliation*; that it is want of *something to do* that makes them meet; and that they appear to be *very well contented with the present state of things*. Well, then, why are they *alarmed*? Why do they march armies and pass dungeon-bills? Do they do these things in sport? Why do they not let us alone with our *trash* and our *liberty-caps*, and go and get their *bars of gold* ready? Why should they be frightened or offended at what we do or say, especially since they have *resolved* to pay in specie?

Our accounts say, that you were *in prison*, which I was glad of; for I have always been afraid, that, *by some means or other*, you would be *killed*. I pray God to preserve your life and your health; for, I am fully convinced, that your life is, at this moment, of inestimable value to our unhappy country, in whose cause you have made so many and such great exertions and sacrifices.

A system of *open martial law* affords but a dismal prospect for the Borough-gentlemen. It will not pay the interest of their Debt (oh, good Debt!); nor will it pay the poor-rates; no, nor will

it *prevent reform*! Turn which way they will; they have no means of avoiding a *something which they dread*.

God bless you and yours, and preserve you from all conspiracy, murder, and sudden death.

I am your faithful friend,

WM. COBBETT.

P. S. I wait with great anxiety for news from England. We want very much to know, what Sidmouth's Manchester men will do with you. To shut you up for some time they may think a *clear gain* to them. And then the Ministers may call the parliament, pass another dungeon-bill and *include you*, as they did the EVANSES! In short, their state is such, that there is no *guessing* at what they will do. It is most likely, that the blood, spilt at Manchester, is merely a beginning. I am sure that the *country* will cry aloud against this bloody work; but, our enemies must not mind the out-cries of the country, if they mean to *persevere in refusing reform*; for, there must, I am convinced, be military government *stark naked*, or reform. From the little that we have seen, it appears, that, at Manchester, there was no breach of the peace; no riot; no affray; not even an assault; that the meeting was legal; held for a legal purpose; and that, in this state of things, you and others were *attacked by a military force*, some of you *made prisoners*, some *wounded*, and some *killed*. Now, if the thing was thus, and if the assailants go unpunished, England is under *military government now*. Yet, this is *necessary*, mind, if there be not to be a *reform*. Let not the hypocritical Whigs, therefore, affect to blame this bloody work, while they abuse us

for endeavouring to get a reform. We have attacked the fraudulent and bloody Borough-system by argument, and have beaten it. We keep up the war against it in the same way and with increased numbers at our back. The system can do nothing more in a *legal way*. The Whigs know this, and yet they blame *illegal acts*. They say, that we all ought to be destroyed; and yet they affect to blame those who destroy us, or endeavour to destroy us. Now, however, they will, I suppose cordially join in the *military plan*, seeing that *they* (able fellows!) have not been able to convince us by *their* eloquence.—Well; *we shall see* before next July, what they will do.—Adieu: take care, what you *eat* and what you *drink*. Remember *Emperor Paul* and *Baron Gortz*! You are of more consequence than either of them ever was.

New York, 28 Sept. 1819.

MY DEAR HUNT,

I am yet without English papers; but, the American papers say, in a brief and loose way; that you are detained on a charge of *High Treason!!!* This was what I expected. To keep you *shut up*: that is the thing. Then we are told, that the Manchester-Magistrates keep all the people *shut up in their houses from sun set to sun rise!* This can, I think, hardly be true as yet. However, perhaps, it is only *premature*; for this it will come to, unless there be “a *constitutional Reform of the Commons’ House of Parliament.*” The Whigs would be for the sun-set bill. They it was, who *drew up* the Bill for Ireland. Mind that! I dare say, that they snigger like winning gamblers at the Manchester tragedy. While Burdett and Waithman will, I dare say,

view it with feelings like those of Satan, when Job’s flocks and herds and children were perishing. You are an object of hatred with every thing cruel, base and treacherous that England contains.

Now, then, with this flagrant violation of all law before their eyes, will any of the *fine new members* stir up a public meeting to remonstrate? Will that ELLICE, who was *jostled* in for Coventry? Will Mr. BIRCH, whom the patriots of Nottingham put in? Will Mr. PALMER, the *reformer* of Reading? Will Mr. CHAMBERLAINE, in putting in whom the people of Southampton had such a *triumph*? Will PETER MOORE, will WILLIAM SMITH, will Mr. BENNETT, will Mr. BROUGHAM; will *any* of the *members* stir? In my opinion *not one*. I shall be glad to find that I am wrong in this opinion; but, this is my opinion. It will be hard, I am aware, to resist so fine an opportunity of doing something for themselves. But, what can they do? By what *finesse* can they make a pretext out of this for a change of ministry, *without a Reform*? What man in the whole country does not *now* see that it is *Reform* that we want. In short, if they attempt to catch the people, they will deceive them less than ever; they will, therefore, if they stir, bustle about and do nothing. Perhaps they will resort to setting on foot *subscriptions for the Manchester sufferers*. This is one great part of their system: they would support or pretend to support, the sufferers under the evil, *while they would see the whole nation annihilated before they would touch the evil*. The thing is an absurdity in itself: but I should not wonder if the rascally Whigs were to try this way of cheating

the people. They will make a great show of *charity*; they will have *committees*; these committees will have *patronage* in their hands; and they will make all the world hear of their noble generosity to the Manchester sufferers, except, after all, ten to one, the Manchester sufferers themselves.

My dear Hunt, that which we now behold, we had to expect. You know, that we always counted on it. We never expected to see the king and his people have their rights 'till after a long struggle. You are only undergoing what Prynne and Hampden underwent; and your name will be honoured for ever. All that you have to do is not to suffer your just revenge to lead you *farther than a reform*, such as we have always demanded; not to suffer it to push you on to any schemes of *republicanism*. We must be *delivered*; but, let us stick to the *form of government*, under which England has produced so many men like yourself, while no republic has ever produced one such man. No: let us stick to *the king and the constitution*. Let our enemies accuse us of treason; but let them accuse us *falsely*; and, in the end, we shall triumph.

I shall, I hope, be in England in less than two months from this day. I shall labour, if I am permitted, for *peace, loyalty, and freedom*. At any rate, I will be there, or at the bottom of the sea. The purpose of my coming here is answered. The *hundred Registers*, that I have sent from this country, have done their work. They have finished the work of *enlightening*. The people of England now know nearly all that they need know as to the great question at issue. Nobody can cheat them again into a belief, that it is

God's will and pleasure that they should be wretched. There is no *guessing* at what may happen. There must be a *great change*; but, many of us may be destroyed during our efforts to preserve the crown and restore the nation to happiness. The Borough-Moloch may take my blood, perhaps; but, I think, that the time is at hand, when I ought to be ready to assist, with my best abilities, my suffering countrymen and our insulted king; and, thus thinking, nothing but death shall keep me from the scene of action. I have lived fifty-three years in as much happiness as man ever enjoyed. I have sons, in whom I shall live after my death. Life is to me not worth a straw if the Boroughmongers' usurpations be unopposed; and, therefore, oppose them I will, with all my might, even at the hazard of that life. God bless and preserve you.

WM. COBBETT.

29 September, 1819.

I see they have some *women* too, in custody! What next? Oh! that noble county of Lancaster! How it will shine in history! These women deserve praise far greater than I am able to bestow. I have just done *here* a thing, which I have always, since I came to the country, vowed that I would do: that is, *taken up the remains of our famous countryman, PAINE, in order to convey them to England!* In his old age and last days he was most basely treated by the *republican rulers*, and by many besides. The Quakers, even the Quakers, refused him a grave! And I found him lying in a corner of a rugged, barren field! The history of the last seven years of his life is full of interesting matter. I have got together all the authentic materials for a complete history of his Life, Labours,

and Death. I have examined *all the manuscripts that he left behind him*, and which are in the hands of an excellent person, to whom he bequeathed them. Several works remain to be published; but, these she does not choose to have published just yet. I am, however, in possession of *every thing* necessary to my undertaking. We will let the Americans see, that *we Englishmen* know how to do justice to the memory of our famous countryman; this child of the "*Lower Orders*;" this man, who gave the "*Boroughmongers*" their name; who gave them the *first heavy blow*; who first cried aloud, "*resist taxation without representation*;" who first exposed the mischiefs of the *Funding System*; who first called the Sinking Fund a *humbug*; who first told the people to go to the Bank, and that, if they did, they would *show the Bank to be insolvent*; whose principles of political economy are, at this very moment, all proved to be true; and whose predictions, are, as to the Bank and its terrible effects, now proved to be prophecies. We will honour his name, his remains, and his memory, in all sorts of ways. While the dead Boroughmongers, and the base slaves who have been their tools, moulder away under unnoticed masses of marble and brass, the tomb of this "*Noble of Nature*" will be an object of pilgrimage with the people. Our expedition set out from New York in the middle of the night; got to the place (22 miles off) at peep of day; took up the coffin entire; brought it off to New York; and, just as we found it, it goes to England. Let this be considered the act of the *reformers of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. In their name we opened the

grave, and in their name will the tomb be raised. We do not look upon ourselves as adopting *all* Paine's opinions upon *all* subjects. He was a *great man*, an *Englishman*, a *friend of freedom*, and the *first and greatest enemy of the Borough and Paper System*. This is enough for us.

Oct. 4.

I see that there is one writer, who calls himself a *Reformer*, who has openly declared for *Republican Government*. Mind, this *he* may do; but, if *we* do it, we prove ourselves *hypocrites* in the first place; and, that we should be *fools*, I will show the moment I arrive in England. Mr. BENBOW, who carries this, will go off a week or two before me. He may not see you; but if he should, he will explain to you the grounds of my resolution to have nothing to do with any one, who shall propose to effect, as to *matters of government*, any thing further than a *radical reform of the Commons' House of Parliament*. I know, that *you* never proposed any thing further; and I trust, that *dreamers*, like Jerry Bentham, will not have been able to change your way of thinking. If we stick to our *one, legal, reasonable* object, we succeed: if we do not, we fail. The man, who, under the present circumstances, would propose *republicanism* as the ultimate object, must be nearly mad, or must have a desire to prevent any change at all. What I want to see is, a Commons' House, fairly chosen by the whole of the Commons. With such a House England would be the best country in the world: with a republican government, she would be a poor, base, contemptible thing: and the people the most distracted and miserable that the world ever saw. This is my fixed opinion. There is no need of *new schemes*. We now have the law with us. Let us keep steadily on; and we shall see a long series of happy and glorious days.